

The University of Chicago

COMPARATIVE PRICES IN LATER
BABYLONIA (625-400 B.C.)

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

1934

By

WALDO HERMAN DUBBERSTEIN

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WALDO H. DUBBERSTEIN

The mass of material from the Near East available for the reconstruction of ancient history, especially that history concerned with the cultures of Mesopotamia and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, is so vast and varied that its proper evaluation is difficult. Students in related fields of ancient history are working feverishly to give their material the adequate publication and treatment that it deserves. But written sources for Babylonian and Assyrian history have appeared in such quantity that the energy and time of scholars have been absorbed almost entirely in a mere presentation of narrative history with but brief recognition of cultural features. Hence the greater part of this material has not been adequately interpreted and correlated.

One of the largest groups of published cuneiform texts—more than ten thousand—dates from the Chaldean and Persian periods. The majority of these texts, commonly called "contracts," are in reality archives of a much greater variety than the term applied to them would seem to indicate. Aside from over six hundred letters, they include actual contracts, receipts, various types of lists, temple documents of many kinds, judicial records, and most valuable administrative material. Many of these collections were published twenty or thirty years ago; some of the more valuable have appeared recently. For some scholars the major value of these documents lay in the date formulas, the basis of our chronology; for others these texts have been hunting-grounds in legal terminology. A few attempts have been made to study the documents for their content, but then usually only a select group and from a special point of view with a definite objective.

Yet these tablets offer source material for a fuller understanding of Babylonian life to an extent that is difficult to duplicate for any other period of ancient history. Details of economic, social, and administrative history and the broader phases of cultural history lie buried within these texts—buried in standard phrases, in dull sales and long

lists.¹ For obvious reasons the present study is limited to a narrow field. We wish to discuss and to analyze comparative prices and values within the time limits of the Chaldean and Persian periods. This study is most emphatically a beginning. Materials have been gathered and studies are being prepared by the author in the broader field of economic and social history.

While economic and social approaches to history are valuable in any period, they are needed especially for the Chaldean and Persian periods, where native sources for narrative history are meager and Greek sources not always reliable. Though these texts do not offer much information for history in its narrower concept, they do have references valuable for narrative history. This material has many limitations, but it will furnish data on which the history of these centuries can be corrected, re-written, and vitalized.

A study of prices is hardly fascinating, yet comparative prices and price levels are of definite historical value, and in certain respects an understanding of prices and values may be the basis for wider and more intricate economic and social studies. It is only proper to state emphatically at the very beginning of this study that isolated prices are of little value, that only the accumulated comparative material can give correct results.

When an attempt is made to establish a ratio of values between labor, property, and the necessities of life, there are many handicaps and serious problems. Furthermore, before entering upon a closer examination of values, the standards of metal values and of measure must be determined.

Much has been written on the origin and early development of coinage. It is commonly asserted that the Lydians invented coinage and then passed their discovery on to the Greeks, who gave this invention to the Western world. However, there seems to be a justifiable doubt whether the Lydian invention had not long been anticipated

¹ Especial recognition and thanks are due Professor A. T. Olmstead, under whose direction this study has been prepared, and whose suggestions and guidance were ever helpful. An inspiration for this special field of study was furnished by Professor Olmstead's article "Materials for an Economic History of the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, II, No. 2 (February, 1930), 219-40. Thanks are also due members of the Assyrian Dictionary staff, and especially Professor F. W. Geers, whose pertinent suggestions were many. Finally, this presentation owes much to the Assyrian Dictionary project of the Oriental Institute, whose files have been utilized in many ways.

in the Semitic world that lay to the east and southeast of Lydia. The "Shamash heads" and "Ishtar heads" of an earlier date sound much like coinage of some variety, and the words of Sennacherib are clear and simple: "I built a form of clay and poured bronze into it as in making half-shekel pieces."² The root used for "making" is *patâqu*, which may be connected with the *pitqa* or *bitqa* which occurs so commonly in texts from the later Persian age.³ Yet these many texts give the impression that silver had long been fashioned into small and definite pieces so that it could be transferred readily and accurately. Further discussion should concern itself only with the question as to whether we may call these smaller silver pieces of definite weight coins. Despite the careful studies on the various attributes of silver and gold, it is quite evident that the several interpretations and conclusions suggested cannot be considered final.⁴

The descriptive and qualifying adjectives become more common in the Persian age, when "silver" (money) is rarely used without some accompanying adjective. When men become very specific in stating what kind of money they wish to receive, then a logical inference is that inferior kinds of money are in circulation.⁵

Although the form and the quality of the money remain somewhat

² D. D. Luckenbill, *Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 123, l. 29; Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, pp. 321, 537 f.

³ *Pitqa* is often translated as "one-eighth." San Nicolo and Ungnad, *NRV*, I, 1, No. 58, l. 2, suggest that within these phrases may lie hidden the beginning of coined money. Cf. also No. 40, n. 3. Two other valuable discussions on the general problem of attributes of silver in this period are Pognon, *JA*, 11. série, IX (1917), 373 ff., XVII (1921), 5 ff.; Landsberger, *ZA*, XXXIX (1930), 283-86. The subsequent references *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Nabunaid*, *Cyrus*, *Cambyes*, and *Darius* refer to J. N. Strassmaier's publications of texts from the reigns of these kings.

⁴ San Nicolo and Ungnad, *op. cit.*, Pognon, *op. cit.*, Landsberger, *op. cit.*, make some of the better suggestions on this problem, yet they are not agreed. A few quotations may suffice to illustrate the problem. *Darius*, No. 75, l. 1: 4 *ma-na kaspi šá ina 1 šiglu pit-qa nu-uh-hu-tu*; *VAS*, IV, No. 23, ll. 25 f.: 1 *ma-na kaspi ina 1 šiglu pit-qa* ù ½ *ma-na 5 šigle kaspi ina 1 šigle hum-mu-šú*; Clay, *YOS*, III, No. 68, l. 27: *kaspi gal-lal-la-ma*; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 38, l. 1: 3 *ma-na kaspu ak-ka-du-u ½ ma-na 1 ½ šiglu kaspu qa-lu-u*; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 369, ll. 1 f.: 2 *ma-na kaspu ha-a-tu*; *Darius*, No. 327, l. 1: . . . *šiglu kaspu šá gi-nu pit-qa*; *BE*, VIII, No. 114, ll. 1 f.: 5 *šiglu kaspi piš-š nu-uh-hu-u*, 5 ½ *šiglu pit-qa šá la gi-na*; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 76, l. 6: *kaspu šá ina 1 šiglu su-ud-du*; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 220, l. 32: 2 *ma-na 7 ½ šiglu kaspu a-na pi-it-qa*; *Cambyes*, No. 59, ll. 1-5: 1 *ma-na 7 šiglu kaspi ir-bi šá ar-ši a-na pi-te-qu a-na mZér-ú-tu amkudimmu na-din*; *VAS*, V, No. 41, l. 9: 1 *ma-na 18 šiglu kaspi piš-š u šir-bir-tum*; *Nabunaid*, No. 515, l. 1: 1 *ma-na kaspu šá ina mi-i-ni-šú*; *Nabunaid*, No. 195, l. 1: 1 *šiglu pit-qa hur-šú*; *Cambyes*, No. 145, l. 5: 17 *šiglu šá na-da-nu u ma-ha-ri*; *VAS*, IV, No. 102, l. 1: 16 *šigle kaspi šá gi-ni šá na-da-nu u ma-ha-ri*; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 67, l. 1: 1 *ma-na kaspi šá na-da-nu u ma-ha-ru*.

⁵ Landsberger, *ZA*, XXXIX, 284 f., sees much inferior silver and alloy hidden under most of the adjectives. For him only *galú* and *murruqu* indicate pure silver.

uncertain, the general monetary system can be established. Money was reckoned according to weight. The largest division was the talent (*biltu*), weighing about sixty-six pounds. The talent was divided into sixty minas (*manû*) of about one and one-tenth pounds in weight. The mina in turn consisted of sixty shekels. Fractions of a shekel also occur, but the *še*, the one hundred and sixtieth of a shekel, commonly used in earlier ages, now was used rarely.⁶

While the passing centuries saw various metals—lead, copper, silver, and gold—used for money in Babylonia and Assyria, Babylonia in this later period was definitely on a silver basis. Lead and copper did not circulate as money, and gold was used as money only rarely. In terms of silver, gold had been cheaper in earlier Babylonia, where one ratio is given as low as four to one.⁷ In the Chaldean era the ratio of silver and gold varied between ten and thirteen to one.⁸ Such scanty evidence as we have seems to indicate that gold was considered a commodity and that hence its value in relation to silver fluctuated on the open market. No evidence for the ratio of these two metals in the Persian era has as yet appeared in the commercial documents.

Since the standards of weight have been considered, it is only proper that measures of capacity also be indicated. During earlier Babylonian history great variation existed in standards of weight and measure. The gradual standardization of these measures in the Chaldean and Persian era is a definite advance in business technique as well as an indication of political unification. The neo-Babylonian *gur* contained one hundred and eighty *qa*; the *pi*, the fifth of a *gur*, thirty-six *qa*. While there is some disagreement on the exact size of the *qa*, the best figures seem to be those of Thureau-Dangin. On the basis of his computations the *qa* is nearly one and a half pints and the *gur* almost four and one-quarter bushels.⁹

⁶ VAS, V, No. 103, ll. 18 f.: $2\frac{1}{2}$ *ma-na pit-qa 6 še kaspi pi-û*.

⁷ Jean, *TCL*, X, No. 72, l. 2. Some of this material has been gathered by Langdon, *JSOR*, XII (1928), 107 ff. Cf. also Poebel, *OLZ*, XVII (1914), 241–45.

⁸ Dougherty, *GCCL*, II, No. 39: ratio 13.8:1, 20th year of Nabopolassar; I, No. 37: ratio 10:1, 4th year of Nebuchadnezzar; No. 324: ratio 12:1, 7th year of Nabunaid; *Nabunaid*, No. 522: ratio 10:1, 11th year; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 454: ratio 10:1; the Persian gold and silver ratio about 13:1, Herodotus iii. 94.

⁹ Thureau-Dangin, *RA*, XVIII, 123 ff., gives the *qa* at 0.8421 liter and the neo-Babylonian *gur* at 151.561 liter. These figures, as his article explains at length, differ from those offered in an earlier study in *JA*, 10. série, XIII (1909), 79 ff. These two articles contain

Connected with problems of capacity measurement is the term *mašihu*, "measure." This word is commonly employed in texts dealing with the transfer of grain and dates, often in preference to the measures belonging to the *gur-pi-qa* system. Pertinent contracts indicate that the "measure" was not always the same. Throughout the Chaldean and Persian eras many creditors had their own "measures" and specified that loans be paid back in those "measures."¹⁰ The temples too had their "measure" by which they lent and received their grains and dates.¹¹ If this were the complete picture, then it could only be called chaotic. However, other contracts help us to a better understanding. A very popular "measure" was one whose capacity was one *pi* or thirty-six *qa*.¹² Some wished to get just a little more and used a "measure" of thirty-seven *qa*.¹³ Another larger "measure" consisted of forty-five *qa*.¹⁴ Already under Nebuchadnezzar there appeared evidences of royal control and royal unification by means of the "measure of the king."¹⁵ The "king's measure" came to be the common "measure" and gradually superseded private "measures." There is no doubt as to the size of this royal measure, for at times some scribe gave a fuller formula and wrote "in the measure of one *pi* of the king."¹⁶ It is therefore legitimate to assume that when "measure" occurs in texts without modification it is equivalent to one *pi* or thirty-six *qa*. This "measure," which apparently first enjoyed popular favor and finally royal definition, was a trifle smaller than our bushel, which would be an ideal size for measuring grains or dates. The larger *gur* measure was far too bulky and the *qa* impossibly small, so popular usage created its own standard and secured its recognition. The use of individual measures was not completely abolished, though under the Persian regime private measures do not

a fair bibliography on this subject. Cf. also Deimel, *Šumerisches Lexikon*, Appendix: "Zahlen und Masze."

¹⁰ *Cyrus*, Nos. 239 and 29; *VAS*, III, Nos. 102, 48, 105, 180; *Darius*, Nos. 144 and 173; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 343. These are merely a representative collection.

¹¹ Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, Nos. 72 and 113; Contenau, *TCL*, XIII, No. 155.

¹² *VAS*, III, Nos. 109, 110, 111, 117; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, Nos. 52 and 56.

¹³ *VAS*, III, No. 148.

¹⁴ *Cyrus*, No. 158; Moldenke, *CTMMA*, II, No. 46.

¹⁵ *Nebuchadnezzar*, Nos. 343 and 424.

¹⁶ *VAS*, III, Nos. 119 and 131; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 67; XIII, No. 128.

appear as frequently as during the Chaldean age. At a time when governmental authority was weakened, during the latter half of the fifth century, the Murashu family, guilty of various irregularities, also used its own measure.

Obviously prices of any ancient or even fairly recent period of history cannot be taken separately and compared with prices from other ages. Only by using comparative prices and values within a definite period can an accurate picture of that age be reconstructed. If on the basis of weight the value of the shekel in Babylonia be placed at approximately twenty-five cents, then prices in Babylonia were infinitely lower than they are today. However, there was a definite balance in the economic structure between the prices of commodities, real estate, and labor.

Dates, one of the two most common food products of Babylonia, were on the daily menu of the average Babylonian. Mass production was also the style in later Babylonia. Contracts show as many as forty thousand bushels grown on one tract. The price of this common food must be reasonable. During the Chaldean age the price of dates was slightly less than one shekel for one *gur*.¹⁷ The Persian conquest brought about no immediate change in the price of this staple food product. One document dated under Cambyses records a price definitely higher.¹⁸ Apparently under Darius I and surely in the decline which took place in the last years of Artaxerxes I and the first years of Darius II, the price of dates doubled. Now it required almost two shekels of silver to buy a single *gur* of dates.¹⁹

Even though the general price trend was upward, local and seasonal

¹⁷ Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 39: 3 *gur* for 2 shekels; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 382: 62 *gur* for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 22: 30 *gur* for 1 mina; *Nabunaid*, No. 382: 65 *gur* for 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; No. 384: 186 *gur*, 135 *qa* for 2 minas, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; No. 430: 8 *gur* for 6 shekels; No. 887: 70 *gur* for 1 mina; No. 919: 42 *gur*, 120 *qa* for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 966: 15 *gur* for 15 shekels; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 74: 44 *gur* for 33 shekels; cf. also *Nabunaid*, Nos. 142, 753, 920; *CT*, XXII, No. 173. As can be seen, there are higher prices than the level established; however, throughout this study we have maintained that exceptional, isolated prices do not disturb the general levels and trends which are definitely visible.

¹⁸ *Cyrus*, No. 28: $\frac{1}{2}$ mina for 22 *gur*, 120 *qa*; No. 35: 5 *gur* for 4 shekels, and No. 113: 2 *gur* for 2 shekels for food; No. 180: 177 *gur*, 2 *pi* for 1 mina and 86 *gur* for 1 mina, 12 shekels; No. 181: 78 *gur* for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas and 120 *qa* for 1 shekel; *Cambyses*, No. 331: 60 *gur* for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas.

¹⁹ *Darius*, No. 2: 84 *gur* for 2 minas; No. 291: 117 *gur* for 90 sheep and 2 oxen; No. 574: 18 *gur* for 1 mina; Clay, *BE*, IX, No. 64: 40 *gur* for 1 mina; No. 68: 10 *gur* for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 28a: 15 *gur* for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; *BE*, X, No. 68: 40 *gur* for 1 mina; Clay, *PBS*, II, No. 53: 4 *gur* for 8 shekels.

fluctuations in the price of dates are not excluded. Even within two months a definite price change occurred.²⁰ Dates would be cheaper in the month of harvest than they would be six months later, hence such a phrase as "dates according to the price of the month Tashritu"—Tashritu and Arahsamnu (roughly October and November) were the months of harvest.²¹ The influence of Babylon was sufficiently strong so that it could fix, to some extent, the price of dates elsewhere in Babylonia. Some tablets read: "according to the price of Babylon."²²

Barley, the most common grain in Babylonia, was produced on a scale rivaling grain production on present-day farms and ranches. Nearly fifty thousand bushels of barley were measured into Eanna, the temple of Ishtar of Uruk, from one piece of property. In earlier centuries of Babylonian history barley and dates were about equal in value; the Chaldean and Persian age with few exceptions found barley more expensive than dates.²³

As elsewhere, information on prices for this product becomes scarcer as the Persian era progresses. Yet barley prices also advanced and continued to be slightly higher than those of dates.²⁴

Barley, like dates, fluctuated in price. Likewise, barley prices depended upon quality and variety. Contracts refer to "early" barley,

²⁰ *Cyrus*, No. 180: 77 *gur*, 2 *pi* for 1 mina; No. 181: 78 *gur* for 1½ minas.

²¹ *Clay*, *BE*, VIII, No. 21; *VAS*, III, No. 18.

²² *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 59; *Darius*, No. 309; *Contenau*, *TCL*, XIII, No. 186.

²³ *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 112: 12 *qa* barley for ½ shekel; No. 194: for a debt of 3½ shekels 4 *gur* barley shall be paid; No. 420: 2 *gur*, 48 *qa* barley for 2 shekels; *Nies and Keiser*, *BIN*, II, No. 109: 580 *gur* barley for 5 minas; *Nabunaid*, No. 279: 214 *gur* barley for 3 minas, 14½ shekels; No. 642: 25 *gur* for ½ mina; No. 1078: 2 minas, ¼ shekel for 300 *gur* barley (the 300, however, is doubtful); *Clay*, *BRLM*, I, No. 49: 24 *gur*, 2 *pi* for 56 shekels; No. 20: 108 *gur* for 3 minas, 50 *gur* 1 *pi* 24 *qa* for 1 mina 3½ shekels; total: 158 *gur* 1 *pi* 24 *qa* for 4 minas 3½ shekels; *BRLM*, I, No. 100: 3 *gur* barley for ½ mina, 3 *gur* 18 *qa* lacking for ½ mina; *Contenau*, *TCL*, XII, No. 46: 10 *gur* for 13 shekels; No. 53: 90 *gur* 2 *pi* for ½ mina 8½ shekels silver, rest of 1 mina 8½ shekels for wool; *TCL*, XII, No. 68: 100 *gur* barley in exchange for 100 *gur* dates; No. 90: 50 *gur* sesame for 150 *gur* barley and 1 talent 40 minas wool for 20 *gur* barley.

²⁴ *Cambyzes*, No. 201: 1 *gur* 120 *qa* barley for 7 shekels; No. 440: 600 *gur* for 1 mina, 400 *gur* for 400 sheep; No. 160: 2 *gur* for 5 shekels; *Darius*, No. 109: 90 *qa* for 5 shekels; No. 507: a penalty: if he does not pay the 5 *gur* barley, then 50 shekels he shall pay; No. 369: a penalty: if in Nisanu he does not pay, the 11 *gur* barley for the silver he shall give; *Keiser*, *BIN*, I, No. 143: 600 *gur* for 23 minas ½ shekel; *CT*, XXII, No. 4: 1 *gur* 12 *qa* barley for 5 shekels; *Clay*, *YOS*, III, No. 33: 2 *pi* barley for 1 shekel. From the later Persian age one reference confirms the advance in prices (*Clay*, *BE*, X, No. 77). An interesting letter from the early Persian period relates that barley is more expensive than dates and that 1 *gur* 100 *qa* dates sell for 1 *gur* barley and 40 *gur* barley sell for 1 mina (*Clay*, *YOS*, III, No. 81). A plaintive letter from Uruk asserts: "You know that in this year there is no barley in Eanna" (*ibid.*, No. 8).

to old and to new barley.²⁵ The city of Babylon again set the price, according to some contracts.²⁶ Price quotations vary according to the months, e.g., Tashritu (October), Aiuru (May), and Simanu (June).²⁷ That there could be a definite shift in prices even within a single month is illustrated by a contract which provides that: "... in Simanu (third month) he shall pay the barley according to the price of Aiuru (second month)." Ordinarily the month of harvest, Aiuru, was the month in which the price of barley was lowest. Our information is not sufficient to establish regular seasonal changes, yet it is highly significant that they did exist. Price variations in different parts of the country cannot be classified and ordered, even though we know that they occurred.

The most popular garden product was garlic, a third staple food in Babylonia. Garlic seems to have been sold commonly in small retail lots, and such transactions were not recorded on clay tablets. There is another difficulty in establishing its relative price. Garlic had its own system of measure and was neither sold by the standard measure of capacity nor weighed out. The largest measure was the *šartu*, next came the *pītu*, and the smallest was the *gidlu*, probably our "bunch."²⁸ Until the value of the several measures is determined, adequate comparison with other food prices cannot be made. Persian rule did not affect the large consumption of garlic. A record sale of 395,000 "bunches" of garlic is made at the beginning of the reign of Cyrus.²⁹

Other farm products were raised in much smaller quantities and cannot be ranked with the three essential food products just discussed.³⁰

Sesame was one of the important agricultural products of Babylonia, since its seed furnished oil to a country in which the olive tree was not grown. Despite the fact that sesame was widely cultivated, such prices as have been found indicate that sesame commanded a much better price than any of the other natural products which we

²⁵ *Nabunaid*, No. 286; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 97.

²⁶ *Darius*, No. 309.

²⁷ *Nabunaid*, Nos. 247 and 936; Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 17; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 153; *Nebuchadnezzar*, Nos. 82 and 112.

²⁸ *Nabunaid*, No. 160: 1000 *šartum* of 150,000 *gidlu*; No. 169: 29 *pītu* of garlic, 600 *gid-dil* of garlic. The reading *šartum* is questionable.

²⁹ *Cyrus*, No. 41; *Cambyses*, No. 369; *Nabunaid*, No. 130.

³⁰ *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 270: 138 *qa* spelt grain for 2 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 62: 5 shekels for 18 *qa* flour.

have considered essential to Babylonian life. With only a small amount of material available, we may state that sesame was worth eight to twelve shekels per *gur*.³¹ One contract from the reign of Nabunaid records fifty *gur* sesame for one hundred and fifty *gur* barley.³²

With the raw material so high, it is only natural that sesame oil should be expensive. Accordingly, a measure of oil sold for more than a shekel.³³ With a steady demand for oil and apparently a limited supply, the high price seems logical. For not only was oil used in food, and as ointment, but it was a remedy prescribed by physicians for the ailments of man and beast.³⁴ For purposes of illumination it was employed in the temples, if not in the ordinary home.³⁵

With grain, dates, and oil, alcoholic beverages may also be classed as necessities of life. To quote prices without discussing the varieties seems impossible. References in several of our texts indicate that certainly at this time the grapevine was grown in Babylonia.³⁶ So besides the imported grape wine,³⁷ there were local grape wines,³⁸ even though they cannot always be identified as such in our texts. A more common and more popular drink was a date wine prepared from dates with the occasional addition of a small quantity of cassia(?).³⁹ Many references indicate that it was the common everyday drink of the

³¹ *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 287: 1 mina for 6 *gur* 120 *qa*; No. 362: $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel for 15 *qa*; No. 277: 2 shekels for 12 *qa*; *Cambyases*, No. 176: 3 minas 5 shekels for 24 *gur* 120 *qa*; *VAS*, IV, No. 22: 1 shekel for 12 *qa* sesame according to the price of Tashritu; *Nabunaid*, No. 748: 1 mina for 8 *gur*; No. 612: 1 mina for 6 *gur*.

³² Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 90.

³⁴ Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 190.

³³ *Nabunaid*, No. 108.

³⁵ *Nabunaid*, No. 777; cf. also No. 957.

³⁶ *Nabunaid*, Nos. 218, 582, 606, 869; *Cambyases*, Nos. 101 and 192; *Darius*, Nos. 193 and 427; *CT*, XXII, Nos. 37, 38, 39, 196; *VAS*, V, No. 110; *ZA*, IV, 144, No. 16; Clay, *BE*, IX, No. 99; Contenau, *TCL*, IX, No. 114; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 222; *Cyrus*, Nos. 197, 272, 709.

³⁷ Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 50: wine from the land of Shushu; Contenau, *TCL*, IX, No. 105: wine from the land of Asallu, the Assyrian Izalla, modern *Ṭur Abdin*; Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 63: wine from Ebir Nari, Syria; see also the list of wines dating from Nebuchadnezzar's reign in *I R* 65, col. i, l. 21.

³⁸ Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 163; Clay, *YOS*, III, Nos. 18, 20, 54, 49, 88, 82, 92, 111; Contenau, *TCL*, IX, Nos. 67, 106, 133; Clay, *BIN*, I, Nos. 21, 94, 95; *Nabunaid*, Nos. 218, 247, 743, 779, 869, 1013; *Cambyases*, No. 262.

³⁹ *Karānu*, at times spelled out in the letters but usually written with the ideogram *GEŠTIN*, refers exclusively to grape wine. The popular date wine is written with the ideogram *KAŠ.SAG*. The reading of this ideogram is not yet certain. Poebel, *ZA*, XXXIX, 147 f., rejects the reading *kurunnu*, which has had wide acceptance. Another reading, *šikāru reštu*, is used. The simple ideogram *KAŠ*, *šikāru*, which apparently means simply "alcoholic drink," is often used to designate the date wine which is usually written with the compound ideogram just discussed.

people, more popular than a similar brew made of barley and cassia(?).⁴⁰

Within these major groups of alcoholic drinks there existed varieties and grades which would be indicated by adjectives such as clear, white, early, old, new, good, year-old.⁴¹ A cheap variety of date wine could be bought for less than one shekel a jar, while a clear grape wine even when sold in larger lots cost more than eight shekels a jar.⁴² Aside from the lack of a sufficient number of price quotations, there are so many descriptive adjectives applied and such variations in the containers employed that we cannot fix the relative cost more closely.⁴³

From early Sumerian times, when sheep were still plucked, wool had remained an important raw product of Babylonia. Glimpses of great flocks and herds are given in the documents of the later period. A temple income list of wool shows over ten thousand pounds of sheep wool and several hundred pounds of goat "wool" being weighed in.⁴⁴

Just before the dawn of the neo-Babylonian era a quotation from the reign of Kandalanu gives more than six pounds of wool for one shekel. Despite variations, the price of wool was also included in the general upward swing during the later Persian age. One price quotation for wool is two pounds of wool for one shekel.⁴⁵ Dyed wool was much more expensive. One pound of wool dyed purple-blue cost fifteen shekels.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ This drink is called *billitu* in some texts: *VAS*, III, No. 47; *Nabunaid*, No. 747; Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 27; Contenau, *TCL*, IX, No. 89; yet it could also be called *šikâru*, which, as already indicated, was the ordinary term for strong drink and which would then be used specifically for the more common and popular drinks.

⁴¹ *Ellu*, *maḥru*, *labiru*, *eššu*, *ṭābu*, *mār šatti* (*CT*, XXII, No. 96).

⁴² *Nabunaid*, Nos. 966 and 279.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, No. 247: 100 *šappatu* for 2 minas; No. 279: 30 *šappatu* of clear wine for 4 minas 6 shekels; 72 *šappatu* wine for 1 mina $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel; 50 *šappatu* wine for 1 mina; No. 1013: 60 *šappatu* wine for 2 minas 4 shekels; Contenau, *TCL*, XIII, No. 188: 7 *dannu* of old drink for 7 shekels; No. 253: 2 *šappatu* large size of new wine for 11 shekels, 5 *šappatu* new wine for 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; *Darius*, No. 118: 8 *šappatu* wine for 15 shekels; Molkenke, *CTMMA*, I, No. 14: 10 *dannu* date wine for 23 shekels.

⁴⁴ Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 87.

⁴⁵ Strassmaier, *Trans. of 8th Oriental Congress*, No. 9: 1 talent 53 minas wool for 17 shekels; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 177: 2 minas $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel wool for 2 shekels silver; *Nabunaid*, No. 452: 1 talent wool for 10 shekels; No. 963: 10 talents 11 minas wool for 2 minas 11 shekels of silver; No. 1115: 8 minas wool for 2 shekels; *PSBA*, IX, 237: $\frac{1}{2}$ talent 12 minas for 16 shekels; *ibid.*, p. 273: $\frac{1}{2}$ talent wool for 10 shekels; Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 144: 15 shekels for 1 talent wool; Clay, *YOS*, III, No. 184: 5 minas for 2 shekels; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 21: 4 talents wool for 1 mina $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel; Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 127: 2 minas wool for 1 shekel; *Cambyes*, No. 175: 45 minas wool for 11 shekels.

⁴⁶ Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 4: *šipātu argamanu*.

Although linen had been known for centuries, no records indicate its use or production in great quantity. The same is true of the later period with which this study concerns itself. In thousands of texts, there is nothing to indicate that linen garments had become part of the everyday clothing, as Herodotus asserted.⁴⁷ Its use for garments is indicated in several texts.⁴⁸ A document from the early Chaldean age gives interesting comparative prices on linen. It is a receipt of linen from the gardeners: 2,000 qâtâte, of which five hundred are a tax (*šibšu*), one thousand for ten shekels silver and five hundred for three *gur* of dates.⁴⁹ Strabo gives a reference to a great linen factory at Borsippa.⁵⁰ While there is no evidence from native sources, it is possible that the basis for the later linen industry was laid in the Chaldean and Persian age.

Many of the vegetables and fruits now well known are represented among the varieties grown in Babylonia. These plants were cultivated commonly, yet there is an almost complete lack of price material or recorded sales. Most of this produce was perishable and therefore could not be kept long or transported like grains and dates. This type of produce would be sold locally in small quantities by fruit or vegetable vendors. Such transactions did not require written documents and hence our present lack of information.

Oxen, the common draft animals, were essential to farming operations on a respectable scale. Already in Hammurabi's era a good ox was valued at twenty shekels,⁵¹ and fifteen hundred years later the price had not changed much—ten to twenty shekels for an ox, with cows somewhat cheaper.⁵² The information from the Persian period

⁴⁷ Herodotus i. 195; Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, I, 408.

⁴⁸ *Darius*, No. 62: *kitû eššu* for a garment; Contenau, *TCL*, IX, No. 117; XIII, 233; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 190: a linen-weaver.

⁴⁹ Moldenke, *CTMMA*, II, No. 13: 14th year of Nabopolassar.

⁵⁰ Strabo xvi. 1, 7.

⁵¹ Hammurabi Code, § 241.

⁵² *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 140: 1 "perfect" (*šuk-lu-lu*) ox to Ebabbarra for 13 shekels; No. 304: 1 "perfect" ox for 7 shekels, 1 "perfect" ox of three years for $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel(?); No. 399: 1 "perfect" ox to Ebabbarra for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 231: 1 ox of two years for 8 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 127: 1 "perfect" year-old ox for 18 shekels, 2 three-year oxen for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 639: 19 oxen for 3 minas, 5 young (two-year) oxen for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 659: 1 three-year ox for 10 *gur* 4 *pi* dates; No. 923: 1 "perfect" ox for 15 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 29: 1 dark ox for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina (*alpu sa-a-mu*); *PSBA*, IX, 237: 1 ox for 16 shekels; Evetts, *EM*, No. 12: 1 cow for 15 shekels; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 58: 1 large cow for 4 shekels; No. 132: 2 oxen for $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel(?); *Nabunaid*, No. 202: 3 oxen (two-, three-, and four-year) for 52 shekels; No. 214: 1 ox for 37 shekels; Dougherty, *GCCI*, I, No. 363: 3-year ox for 15

does not indicate a sharp break with the Chaldean, yet some of the later quotations are distinctly higher. If Hammurabi wished to fix arbitrarily the value of an ox, these contracts show that at least in this later age the cost of the ox varied according to several characteristics. Some of the oxen sold are not draft oxen. The choicest animals often went to temples, hence we really have two classes of animals to consider. A pregnant cow sold for one mina three shekels is obviously sold for more than its commercial value.⁵³ The pregnant cow was used in a special royal sacrifice, the *ḥarû* offering, performed by the *kalû* priest.⁵⁴ Such an animal, ritually pure, demanded a price three and four times its commercial value. This is a good illustration of the influence exerted by temples in purely economic matters.

Much more common and more useful than large cattle were sheep and goats. They furnished wool and gave valuable milk,⁵⁵ and on special occasions such as feast days they could be sacrificed and their flesh eaten. Even a poor peasant could keep a few small animals, while temples and large estates maintained great flocks and herds. The price of an ordinary sheep or goat during the Chaldean period is about two shekels, a reasonable price according to the scale of Babylonian values.⁵⁶ Under the Persian regime fluctuations in animal prices are

shekels; *Cambyses*, No. 254: 1 ox four years for 10 shekels; No. 381: 1 ox two years for $\frac{1}{3}$ mina 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; No. 254: 1 ox for 10 shekels; No. 79: 1 ox for 15 *gur* 90 *qa* dates; *Z A*, IV, 140, No. 10: a cow for 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels silver; Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 157: 60 large cows for 10 minas; *VAS*, VI, No. 135: 1 ox for $\frac{1}{3}$ mina 5 shekels (*alpu sa-a-mu*); Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 144: 1 fat ox for 33 shekels, 1 fat ox for 13 shekels, 1 ox, two pregnant sheep for 7 shekels; *Darius*, No. 282: 1 ox, three years, for 14 shekels. The ridiculously low price of $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel, which occurs several times, may be an error for $\frac{1}{3}$ mina or a misreading of the signs for 12 shekels.

⁵³ Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 108.

⁵⁴ Clay, *YOS*, III, No. 3: the *ḥarû* sacrifice ordered by Nebuchadnezzar; No. 60: the *ḥarû* offering of the king; No. 25: the *ḥarû* offering must be a pregnant cow; *CT*, XXII, No. 46: the pregnant cow of the king. Special prices were paid by temples for other choice animals. Cf. also *Darius*, No. 297: 30 Akkadian ewes.

⁵⁵ The rarity of milk products in these late texts is more surprising because such products are common in many of the earlier collections.

⁵⁶ *Nabunaid*, No. 363: 14 sheep for $\frac{1}{3}$ mina 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; No. 366: 16 sheep for 26 shekels; No. 744: 18 sheep for 35 shekels; Clay, *BIN*, I, No. 37: 2 goats for 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels, 1 goat for 4 shekels, 1 goat for 3 shekels; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 58: 1 large kid and 2 goats for 2 shekels, 2 mature mother sheep for 1 shekel; *PSBA*, VII, No. 4: 30 sheep raised on grain for 15 shekels; *Cyrus*, No. 32: 13 (?) sheep for 56 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; No. 152: 8 sheep for 17 shekels; *Darius*, No. 1: 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas 2 shekels for 6 sheep; No. 16: 12 sheep for 12 shekels; No. 190: 2 large sheep for 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels, 5 sheep for 36 shekels; *Cambyses*, No. 211: 8 large stable sheep to Ebabbarra for 58 shekels; No. 146: 10 large sheep to Ebabbarra for 1 mina; Clay, *YOS*, III, No. 104: 1 sheep for Eanna for 1 mina; *Nabunaid*, No. 1007: 24 sheep for 1 mina 9 shekels, 4 sheep for 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels.

common, and the majority of quotations are higher than the Chaldean prices.

Donkeys, the burden-carriers of Babylonia, usually commanded a high price. Prices range from five shekels to two minas. In the Chaldean age the average sale price of a donkey was almost thirty shekels. In the Persian period the price advanced to forty and fifty shekels per animal.⁵⁷ Various qualities, most of them somewhat vague to us, helped determine the price of the animal. The age of the animal certainly influenced its price and is often given in the sales document. Most of the animals were "branded," so that ownership could not be disputed. Often the brand was on the ear, at times elsewhere. The star brand on animals and on slaves of the Eanna temple in Uruk is often referred to in documents as the absolute proof of ownership.

Since Babylonia lacked wood and stone, clay bricks largely took the place of the normal wood and stone. The crude, sun-dried brick commonly used was easily manufactured by the builder himself. Accordingly, the sun-dried brick did not appear in commercial transactions in proportion to the amount used; whereas the oven-baked brick could not be made so readily and hence was purchased more often. The sale price of baked brick ranged from fifty to a hundred bricks for a shekel, a relatively high price.⁵⁸ For sun-dried brick we have no prices to quote.⁵⁹

Asphalt, used as mortar, is at times sold together with the bricks. Forty-two hundred bricks were sold with a hundred sixty talents of

⁵⁷ Dougherty, *GCCI*, I, No. 269: 1 horse for 3½ minas; Contenau, *TCL*, XIII, No. 127: 1 donkey, 9 years old, for 9 shekels; Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 160: 1 she-ass for 10 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 140: 1 donkey for 1 mina; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 13: 1 dark five-year-old donkey sold for 2 minas; No. 282: 32 shekels are paid for 1 donkey in the 35th year; *Cambyses*, No. 1: 1 eight-year donkey for 5 shekels; No. 169: 1 donkey for 13 shekels; *Darius*, No. 253: 1 donkey for 50 shekels; No. 349: 1 she-ass for 10 shekels; No. 550: 1 six-year donkey for ½ mina; *VAS*, V, No. 94: 1 three-year donkey for 12 shekels; No. 144: 1 donkey for ¼ mina; No. 158: 1 donkey for 40 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 34: reference to a twenty-year she-ass.

⁵⁸ Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 95: 3,000 baked bricks for 1 mina; Contenau, *TCL*, IX, No. 138: 700 baked bricks for 10 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 947: 4,200 baked bricks for 52 shekels; Dougherty, *YOS*, III, No. 34: 10,000 baked bricks given to Eanna for 1 mina. The baked brick is called *agûrru*, the sun-dried brick *libittu*.

⁵⁹ Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 158: 2,800 unbaked bricks sold but no price given; *Nabunaid*, No. 428: 1 mina given for unbaked brick but no quantity given; Clay, *BE*, IX, No. 51: 25,240 unbaked bricks to be made, counted, and delivered into the shed; Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 126: ¼ mina paid for transporting 4,000 baked bricks from the city Shallata to the storehouse of Eanna; this seems to be a high charge for mere transportation even if Shallata were some distance from Uruk; *Cambyses*, No. 88: ¼ mina given for the baking of bricks.

asphalt according to a sales receipt. Asphalt was cheap; about six hundred pounds were given in a transaction for one shekel. Other references indicate that large quantities of this mortar were used in Babylonian industrial life, however few price quotations have been noted.⁶⁰

Wood and stone were imported into Babylonia during all historical periods, yet little is known about this commerce in the later periods. Some few sales of wood prove that it was an expensive article.⁶¹ No prices of building stone have been noted.

Metals, like building materials, were not found in Babylonia, and so every bit of metal used, whether precious or otherwise, was imported and reached Babylonia only after hundreds of miles of transportation. Therefore it is a genuine surprise to note the quantity and the cheapness of the various metals throughout the land. The preliminary discussion on weights indicated that gold rose in value during the centuries in relation to silver, the basic monetary metal. In contradistinction, other metals became cheaper. In particular is this true of iron, most useful of the common metals. A quotation gives eleven pounds of iron for one shekel.⁶² So important is a list of imports dated to the sixth year of Nabunaid that part of the text is here given.⁶³ There is no introduction, the list begins abruptly with the materials and their prices:

Ten talents of copper from Cyprus for 3 minas and $\frac{1}{3}$ shekels silver; 81 minas $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel dyestuff⁶⁴ for 2 minas 2 shekels; 37 minas lead for 55 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels silver; 16 minas 15 shekels of dyed wool for 2 minas $\frac{2}{3}$ shekels . . . 295 minas of copper from Cyprus for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas 8 $\frac{1}{3}$ shekels silver; 55 minas of lapis lazuli for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ shekels; 2 talents 33 minas of *tuman* wood for 1 mina 22 shekels; 3 talents 53 minas alum from Egypt for 1 mina 17 $\frac{2}{3}$ shekels; 32 minas $\frac{1}{3}$ shekels dyestuff⁶⁴ for $\frac{2}{3}$ minas 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; 130 minas iron from Cyprus for $\frac{1}{2}$ minas 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; 257 minas iron from the Lebanon for $\frac{2}{3}$ mina 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ shekels.

⁶⁰ *Nabunaid*, No. 947: bricks and mortar sold together. Other references: *Nabunaid*, No. 1026; *Nebuchadnezzar*, Nos. 28 and 84; *Cambyses*, No. 105. The Babylonian has two words, *iddû* and *kupru*, which are conventionally translated as "pitch" and "asphalt." From our texts it seems possible to conclude that there were two distinct varieties of this bitumen-like substance, but owing to the difficulty of translation and our general lack of knowledge, no certain identification can be made at present; cf. Contenau, *TCL*, XII, 74.

⁶¹ *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 102: 24 pieces of cypress sold for 27 shekels; Clay, *BIN*, I, No. 4: 5 talents of cedar wood sold for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; Clay, *PBS*, I, Part I, No. 173: 2 large wooden doors sold for 5 minas silver; *Darius*, No. 189: fig wood given for table-making.

⁶² Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 162.

⁶³ Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 168.

⁶⁴ *Inzahureti*, "dyestuff" (Langdon, *RA*, XXVIII, 17).

The remaining ten lines of the document list other kinds of imports such as wine, honey, and wood.⁶⁵

The cheapness of these metals, their common use in everyday life, and the frequent references to metal-workers all help to restore the picture. Of significance is the fact that prices of metals in this age are lower than the prices of metals from earlier periods, whereas other prices are generally higher. In explanation one may hazard a guess that improved mining and smelting techniques or new sources of ore were chiefly responsible.

The social and economic significances of slavery do not concern us in this study. However, slave prices also belong to comparative prices. There is probably more information available on the price of slaves than on any other article of sale. Figures on the size of the slave population are not to be found, but frequent references to them in economic texts denote large numbers. As in the case of animals, the price varied according to quality, age, and other characteristics.

The mean level of slave prices may be established with some certainty. Under Nebuchadnezzar the value of a slave was about forty shekels.⁶⁶ During the following years, when Babylon had three short reigns, the price did not change appreciably.⁶⁷ From the seventeen years of Nabunaid's reign a great mass of material shows the average

⁶⁵ Another important list from the archives of this same importer, Iddinahu, with similar quantities of metals, is given in Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 84; *Nabunaid*, No. 428, gives $\frac{1}{2}$ talent of iron for 8 shekels silver.

⁶⁶ Female slaves were generally cheaper, though exceptions are not uncommon. Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 27: 2 slaves for 2 minas 20 shekels; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 61: 1 slave for 1 mina 8 shekels; No. 62: 1 female slave for 45 shekels; No. 67: 1 female slave and son for 19 shekels; No. 70: a son sold for a fixed price not stated; No. 94: 1 slave for 58 shekels; No. 96: 1 slave for 59 shekels; No. 97: 1 female slave for 34 shekels; No. 100: 1 female slave and daughter for 35 shekels; No. 103: 1 slave for 1 mina 5 shekels; No. 110: 1 slave for $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel(?) [read 12 shekels or $\frac{1}{2}$ mina]; No. 117: 1 slave sold for 52 shekels; No. 147: 2 female slaves for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; No. 166: 1 female slave for 25 shekels; No. 175: 1 female slave for $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel(?) [12 shekels or $\frac{1}{2}$ mina]; No. 195: 1 slave for 46 shekels; No. 197: slave pledged for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 201: 1 female slave for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina; No. 203: 1 slave for 51 shekels; No. 228: 1 slave for 42 shekels; No. 261: slave taken as a business associate; *VAS*, V, No. 13: 2 slaves for 35 shekels; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 386: 1 female slave for 23 shekels; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 51: slave for 23 shekels.

⁶⁷ Strassmaier, *Trans. of 6th Oriental Congress*, No. 10: 1 female slave sold; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 65: 1 male and 1 female slave sold for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; Dougherty, *GCCI*, II, No. 95: 2 female slaves for 54 shekels; Evetts, *Babylonische Texte*, "Neriglissar," No. 1: 1 female and daughter for 45 shekels; No. 2: 4 slaves for 2 minas; No. 7: 1 slave for 25 shekels; No. 23: 1 slave for 36 shekels; No. 59: 1 male and 2 female slaves sold for 1 mina 20 shekels; No. 42: 2 slaves sold but no price given; *V R* 67, No. 2: 2 female slaves for 1 mina 3 shekels.

price of a slave to be fifty shekels; however, during the last years of his rule the average rose to a bit over fifty shekels.⁶⁸

Persian rule did not bring violent or radical changes. The few slave sales dated under Cyrus permit us to conclude that the trend toward rising prices was continuing and that the mean price was now over a mina (sixty shekels) of silver for one slave.⁶⁹ A larger quantity of material from the reign of Cambyses indicates that the price level of a slave had now reached a mina and a half.⁷⁰ The contracts from the years of Darius I show a further advance in the value of slaves. A

⁶⁸ *VAS*, V, No. 22: 1 slave for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina 4 shekels; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 2: 2 slaves dedicated upon owner's death to Ishtar; No. 5: 1 slave, a barber, for 58 shekels; Strassmaier, *Trans. of 6th Oriental Congress*, No. 13: 1 female slave for 20 shekels, 1 male slave for 1 mina 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 40: 2 female slaves for 50 shekels; Dougherty, *GCCI*, I, No. 385: 1 slave for 1 mina; Moldenke, *CTMMA*, I, Nos. 11 and 12: 1 female and son for 20 shekels each; *Nabunaid*, No. 71: 11 *gur* dates owed to a slave; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 56: 5 female slaves of the temple loaned out; *Nabunaid*, No. 194: 1 slave for 1 mina 5 shekels; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 87: 1 slave for 1 mina; *Nabunaid*, No. 273: 3 female slaves for 3 minas; No. 274: 1 slave for 52 shekels; No. 280: 80 *gur* barley loaned by a slave; No. 336: 1 slave, a baker, sold for 55 shekels; No. 388: 1 female slave for 14 shekels; No. 392: 2 male, 1 female, slaves sold for 2 minas 50 shekels; No. 400: 1 male, 2 female slaves for 2 minas; No. 434: 1 slave for 50 shekels; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 197: 1 female slave for 37 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 508: 6 slaves sold to Itti-Marduk-balaṭu but no price given; No. 509: 3 slaves for 2 minas; No. 518: 1 slave for 1 mina 5 shekels; No. 533: 2 slaves for 1 mina 20 shekels; No. 564: 1 slave for 1 mina; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 99: 1 slave for 50 shekels; *YOS*, VI, No. 201: 1 female slave for 15 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 634: 1 female slave for 32 shekels; No. 648: 1 female slave for 35 shekels; No. 665: 1 female slave for 1 mina 10 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 30: 1 slave for 1 mina 5 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 666: 1 slave for 50 shekels; No. 671: 1 female slave for 37 shekels; No. 675: 1 female slave for 47 shekels; No. 680: 1 female slave for 31 shekels; No. 756: 1 slave for 50 shekels; No. 801: 1 slave for 60 shekels; No. 806: 1 slave for 1 mina 10 shekels; No. 832: 2 female slaves and 1 son for 1 mina silver; No. 829: 1 female slave for 1 mina 20 shekels; Nos. 874 f.: loan of dates by slave; No. 892: 1 slave for 40 shekels; No. 1020: 1 slave for 40 shekels; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 116: 2 slaves and 1 son for 3 minas 10 shekels; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 72: 1 slave for 2 minas silver; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 207: 1 slave for 40 *gur* barley; *Nabunaid*, No. 1082: 1 female slave for 1 mina 7 shekels.

⁶⁹ *VAS*, V, No. 35: 1 female slave and her month-old son for 1 mina 12 shekels; Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 17: slave given to Ishtar as a *shirqu*; *Cyrus*, No. 332: slave sold for $\frac{1}{2}$ mina in the 7th year of Nabunaid—the same slave sold for 1 mina 50 shekels in the 6th year of Cyrus; *Cyrus*, No. 362: 1 slave for 45 shekels.

⁷⁰ *Cambyses*, No. 15: 1 female slave for 1 mina; Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 114: 1 slave for 1 mina; *Cambyses*, No. 143: 1 female slave for 1 mina; Strassmaier, *Trans. of 6th Oriental Congress*, No. 19: secret sale of a slave; Contenau, *TCL*, XIII, No. 160: 1 female slave and her son for 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas silver; Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 164: 2 boys (four and five years old) for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; *VAS*, V, No. 51: 1 male slave, a baker, for 2 minas; *Cambyses*, No. 307: 2 female slaves for 3 minas; *VAS*, V, No. 53: 4 female slaves for 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; *Cambyses*, No. 309: 3 daughters for 2 minas 40 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 56: 1 female slave and son for 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; *Cambyses*, No. 334: 1 female slave and three-month-old daughter for 2 minas; No. 362: 3 female slaves for 7 minas 56 shekels; No. 384: 2 male, 2 female slaves for 2 minas 40 shekels; No. 388: 2 female slaves sold by mother for 2 minas 40 shekels; *AJSL*, XXVII, 226 ff.: 2 male slaves, 1 female for 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas.

slave was now worth about one and two-thirds mina.⁷¹ From the scanty material published from the years of Xerxes one sale of a slave is made for two minas.⁷² The steady rise in these prices is so obvious that no further comment is needed.

Real estate values belong to a study of comparative prices, even though an unusual assortment of difficulties appears in this connection. Land tenure in Babylonia was of several types. There were the various royal grants held in fief tenure. The Murashu texts indicate that such holdings were still extensive and varied at the end of the fifth century.⁷³ The several great temples still held large tracts of land which they commonly rented but did not sell. Finally, there was the land held in fee simple by the individual. With much of the land held by the state and the temples, the number of land transactions is not so large as that of other sales. However, documents of transfer do give a careful delimitation of the property sold and so permit the establishing of a definite ratio of values.⁷⁴

Toward the end of the Assyrian period a tract of cultivated land in

⁷¹ *VAS*, V, Nos. 62 f.: 1 female slave for 2 minas; *Darius*, No. 212: 1 slave for 4 minas 10 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 70: 1 female slave for 2 minas 5 shekels; No. 73: 1 female slave for 2 minas 52 shekels. These two sales are of the same woman and indicate that within two years her value had increased nearly 50 shekels, that is, if the first sale price was correct. *Darius*, No. 340: 1 male, 1 female slave sold for 4 minas silver; *VAS*, V, No. 90: 1 female slave for 2 minas 20 shekels; No. 84: 1 male slave for 2 minas; No. 93: 1 male slave for 1 mina 20 shekels; *PSBA*, VI, 102: 1 slave for 1 mina 40 shekels; *Darius*, No. 537: 1 slave for 53 shekels; No. 568: 2 female slaves sold for silver; *VAS*, V, No. 95: 1 female slave for 50 shekels; Contenau, *TCL*, VIII, No. 200: 1 female and her son for 2 minas silver; *VAS*, V, No. 126: 1 female slave for 1½ or 2½ minas; No. 127: 1 female slave for 4 minas of silver; No. 111: 1 female slave for 2 minas; No. 112: 1 female slave for 1 mina 25 shekels; No. 114: 1 female slave for 1 mina; No. 128: 1 female slave for ½ mina silver; No. 141: 2 male slaves for 4 minas; No. 142: 1 slave for 2 minas; No. 149: 1 slave for 1½ minas; No. 150: 1 female slave for ⅔ mina.

⁷² *VAS*, V, No. 118: 1 female slave for 2 minas from the 8th year of Xerxes; Clay, *PBS*, II, Part 1, No. 65: 4 slaves for 5 minas silver, 3d year of Darius II. This isolated evidence is of value but cannot be used as proof for general prices of those years.

⁷³ *Bīt ešri*, *bīt narkabti*, *bīt qašti*, *bīt sīst* all seem to imply feudal tenure, but the specific meaning is not clear; e.g., Clay, *PBS*, II, Part I, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 65, 209; Clay, *BE*, IX, Nos. 45, 91, 94, 106; X, No. 102; Krückmann, *TMH*, II/III, No. 143.

⁷⁴ The various measures used are not all definitely established in terms of modern measures. Two discussions by Thureau-Dangin (*JA*, 10. série, XIII [1909], 97 ff.; *RA*, XVIII, 134) are superior to much that has been previously written on this subject. The main outline of the system used may be given. 1 GAR equals 2 reeds (*qanû*); 1 reed equals 7 cubits (*ammatu*); 1 cubit equals 24 fingers or digits (*ubānu*); a cubit equals about 18 inches. Field measures were computed on the basis of *gur*, *pi*, *qa*, whose relation we know. One *qa* is equal to 10 GAR of field; 1 *qa* also equals 675 square feet. Computations are also made with the square cubit and the square reed, especially where the plots are very small. Aside from giving the measurements, the documents are careful also to give the boundaries according to the owners whose property is adjacent. Cf. also Deimel, *Šumerisches Lexikon*, Appendix: "Zahlen und Masze."

Babylonia sold at the rate of ten *qa* for one shekel.⁷⁵ This may well have been an unusually poor piece of property, for prices from the beginning of the Chaldean age for this same kind of land varied from two to four *qa* land for one shekel.⁷⁶ Under Nabunaid the price apparently advanced to one or two *qa* for one shekel.⁷⁷ The few sales with full information which date from the Persian age suggest a further rise in value. Under Darius I grain land sold at two to three shekels per *qa*.⁷⁸ Two Chaldean sales of uncultivated land were 24 *qa* and 11 *qa*, respectively, for a single shekel and show how much more valuable was improved land.⁷⁹

Orchard and garden land form a class of sales best treated separately. We should expect this kind of land to be higher in value than grain fields. Then, too, the price would reflect the location. The price of such lands during the Chaldean age may be placed tentatively at one and a half shekels for one *qa* of land.⁸⁰ From Cyrus a quotation establishes the price of orchard land at more than two shekels for one *qa* land, and with Darius the price varied from two to three shekels per *qa* with even higher rates given.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 38: 2 *pi* 30 *qa* field for 11½ shekels. Dated the 20th year of Shamash-shum-ukin.

⁷⁶ Pohl, *An. or.*, IX, No. 4: 4 *pi* field for 26 shekels, 4 *gur* field for 1 mina ½ shekel, 18 *qa* field for 11½ shekels (Nabopolassar's reign), 2 *pi* 18 *qa* field with trees ½ mina 4 shekels (Kandalanu's reign); Speleers, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Asie*, No. 276: 1 *gur* land for total of 5 minas, accession year of Nergal-shar-ušur; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 135: 4 *pi* for 74 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 7: 1 *gur* 2 *pi* for 2 minas; No. 12: 4 *qa* planted land for 1 shekel.

⁷⁷ *Nabunaid*, No. 477: 70 *qa* land for 1 mina 10 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 20: 12 *qa* land for 19 shekels; *Coll. de Clercq*, II, 120, Pl. XXVI, Tablet B: 2 *pi* 18 *qa* land for ¾ mina 1 shekel (1st year of Nabunaid).

⁷⁸ *VAS*, V, No. 48: 2 *gur* field for 4 minas 4 shekels; *Darius*, No. 26: 6 *qa* for 11 shekels; No. 194: 65 *qa* for 55½ shekels; *PSBA*, Vol. XIV (1891-92), Pl. 142 (3d year of Darius). Other contracts of land sale from this period lack either the price or the measurements: *VAS*, V, Nos. 91 and 92; IV, No. 141; V, No. 140.

⁷⁹ *VAS*, V, No. 3: 30 *gur* for 2 minas 45 shekels; No. 12: 11 *qa* for 1 shekel. Dated to the years of Kandalanu and Nebuchadnezzar.

⁸⁰ Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 6: 12 *qa* for 1 mina; *VAS*, V, No. 4: 4 *gur* for 19 minas; these two contracts are from Kandalanu. The first is very high while the second is more regular. Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 30: 1 *pi* 12 *qa* orchard land for 6½ minas, from Nabopolassar, is also high. The land, located at Borsippa, apparently was on a main highway and close to the city and this enhanced its value. Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 35: 150 cubits by 100 cubits for 1 mina 20 shekels; Evetts, *EM*, No. 23: 4 *pi* for 3½ minas 6 shekels; *Nabunaid*, No. 116: 5 *gur* 59 *qa* for 19 minas 17½ shekels; No. 132: 4 *gur* for 21½ mina; No. 193: 12 *qa* for ½ mina 2 shekels; Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 43: 60 *qa* for 37 shekels; No. 44: 1 *pi* for 1 mina; *Nabunaid*, No. 964: 45 *qa* for 35 shekels; Krückmann, *TMH*, II/III, No. 15: 21 *qa* for 1 mina 12½ shekels.

⁸¹ *Cyrus*, No. 188: 41 *qa* orchard for 1 mina 36 shekels; *Darius*, No. 26: 6 *qa* for 11 shekels; No. 152: 1 *gur* orchard for 8 minas 25½ shekels, 2 *gur* cultivated field for 2

Urban property, houses with small plots of land, forms another group. It may be of significance that there are more rent contracts for this type of property than there are documents of sale. Since not only the location but also the size and kind of building on the property entered into the value, a scale of price levels is difficult to secure. Within these limitations, the average price of a house and lot before the Persian age was fifteen shekels per reed.⁸² The few sale agreements from the Persian age record a mean price of forty shekels per reed, nearly three times the average price of the late Assyrian and Chaldean ages.⁸³

That the picture of Babylonian prices be as complete as possible, isolated sales of various objects have been added at this point. Boat sales for one mina, for two minas five shekels, and two and one-third minas show that they were valued property.⁸⁴ Salt, considered an essential to life, is not often mentioned. It is impossible to arrive at definite conclusions on the basis of material available.⁸⁵ Possibly salt was a state monopoly; the frequent substitution of the third ancestor in the paternity formula by a term which might be translated the

minas. This contract shows the great difference in value between garden land and field land. *Nabunaid*, No. 193: 60 *qa* planted field for 1 mina; No. 194: 65 *qa* 9 *gar* for 2 minas 1 shekel; No. 321: 6 *gur* garden for $\frac{1}{2}$ talent; No. 466: 15 *qa* orchard for 56 shekels; Strassmaier, *Trans. of 6th Oriental Congress*, No. 33: 1,000 *gur* field sold by an Egibi descendant without a definite sum quoted. *VAS*, VI, No. 157: 1 *gur* 1 *pi* sold for 2 minas; *VAS*, V, No. 105: 1 *gur* 1 *pi* for 2 minas; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 73: 12 *qa* for 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels.

⁸² Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 9: 13 cubits for 6 shekels; Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 3: 12 reeds for 3 minas 12 shekels; No. 7: 7 reeds for 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 19: 9 reeds for 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas of silver; No. 55: 5 cubits for 4 shekels; *VAS*, V, No. 6: 6 reeds for 3 minas 1 shekel; *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 164: 17 reeds 4 cubits 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ digits for 6 minas 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels.

⁸³ *VAS*, V, No. 103: 24 reeds 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ digits for 2 minas 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels 6 grains; *Cyrus*, No. 345: 6 reeds 6 cubits 13 digits for 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; *Darius*, No. 323: 6 reeds for 5 minas silver; No. 325: 9 reeds for 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas; No. 326: 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas for a house with no dimensions given; *VAS*, V, No. 96: 8 reeds sold at a rate of 1 reed for 16 shekels; IV, No. 98: sale of 6 reeds property, apparently not with a house, for excavation.

⁸⁴ Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 173: 110 *gur* ship sold to Eanna for 1 mina; *Cyrus*, No. 310: 1 new ship sold for 2 minas 5 shekels; Pohl, *An. or.*, VIII, No. 59: 1 ship of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet width sold to Eanna for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas (8th year of Cyrus); Moldenke, *CTMA*, II, No. 47: sale of a bark (*makurru*) for 1 shekel; the term used elsewhere for boat or ship is *elippu*; the difference in meaning is uncertain.

⁸⁵ *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 447: 2 talents of salt for 2 shekels given to the temple Ebabbarra. This is very cheap. *Nabunaid*, No. 850: $\frac{1}{2}$ talent 10 minas salt for *sattukku* and *guqqû* offerings for Simanu; No. 1017: 15 *qa* salt given for the 16th year; No. 113: 1 *pi* salt; Pohl, *An. or.*, VIII, No. 33: 15 minas salt without price noted.

"man of the salt" points in that direction.⁸⁶ Honey, more common in Assyria, is quoted at about four *qa* for one shekel.⁸⁷

Prices of manufactured articles are not so numerous in our texts. Then, also, there are many objects difficult to identify. In general, manufactured things are rather high—a condition to be expected in a civilization whose technological developments were low, when judged by modern standards. Hence a single garment could demand the inordinately high price of two minas.⁸⁸ On the other hand, fifty small tools cost only two shekels.⁸⁹ For illustrative purposes we list a few manufactured articles here together with prices:

One copper heater for 2 shekels; 11 copper cups for 1 shekel; 1 iron spade (or hoe), 1 ax, and 2 other implements for 2 shekels; 4 chairs and 3 couches for 2 shekels.⁹⁰

Into the general price picture correctly belong wages and rent. Studies in social history indicate significant changes in the classes of society for later Babylonia, yet the free laborer remained even as he had been in earlier days. Perhaps in harvest time much outside labor was needed, yet the several collections of letters show that hired labor was also commonly employed for regular canal work. In fact, some of the letters show that at times it was even difficult to hire as much free labor as was needed. This is corroborated by the statement that the laborers were hired for five shekels a month, an unusually high scale of wages, even in comparison with the rising prices of the period.⁹¹ For keeping watch in the temple from the 15th to the 27th of the month Nisanu, two men receive thirty-four shekels. This sum likewise is quite above all standard rates of recompense.⁹² Other tab-

⁸⁶ Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, Nos. 118 and 150: amêlu ša tîbâtî-šu. The state monopoly and control of salt in Seleucid times is well known and may have its origin in the earlier Orient. New evidences: Robert H. McDowell, *Stamped and Inscribed Objects from Seleucia on the Tigris* (Ann Arbor, 1935), pp. 179 ff. Cf. also Ezra 7:22, the decree of Artaxerxes in regard to salt for the Jews.

⁸⁷ *Nabunaid*, No. 428: 7 shekels for 30 *qa* honey; Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 47: wax for 15 shekels.

⁸⁸ Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 80; Peiser, *BV*, No. 95.

⁸⁹ *Nabunaid*, No. 604: 50 *zab-bi-lu* for 2 shekels. The iron *marru* weighed about 2 pounds; *Nebuchadnezzar*, Nos. 204 and 285; *Darius*, No. 270; Pohl, *An. or.*, IX, 6: list of nearly 200 gold and silver objects for a temple and 80 iron *handuḥ*.

⁹⁰ Moldenke, *CTMMA*, I, No. 14, 6th year of Nabunaid; *Nabunaid*, No. 441; *Cyrus*, No. 287.

⁹¹ Clay, *YOS*, III, No. 71; Dougherty, *YOS*, VI, No. 7: silver for the laborers.

⁹² Contenau, *TCL*, IX, No. 86.

lets give wage payments at a more normal rate. Four workmen were hired out at approximately one shekel per month; other documents provide for the hire of a young son and a daughter at four and twelve shekels of silver per year, respectively, while a slave is rented for three shekels per year.⁹³

Whereas but few boat sales are known, ample evidence exists to show that boats were used in great numbers and that they transported the bulk of Babylonian products. They were rented more often than sold, and the standard rate was one-half shekel per day. From the twenty-sixth year of Darius a rent contract provides for one shekel daily. This rise is in harmony with other advances.⁹⁴

Oxen likewise were rented frequently. An ox or a cow rented by the year for as much as ten *gur* barley, worth ten to twenty shekels. So high is this charge that the year's rent would be equal to the approximate value of the animal.⁹⁵

Various types of storehouses were likewise rented. A small structure is given for two *gur* barley yearly. Other buildings were rented for a daily fee, such as three *qa* of grain or food.⁹⁶ Water for irrigation, so essential for agriculture in Babylon, could command a good price when purchased privately. Twenty-five per cent of a date harvest went as rent for the water supply in one instance.⁹⁷ Another farmer

⁹³ *Cyrus*, No. 278: young son for 4 shekels a year; *VAS*, V, No. 125: mother rents her daughter for 12 shekels a year for two years. Pohl, *An. or.*, IX, No. 10: agricultural worker receives 1 shekel per month, accession year of Darius. *VAS*, V, No. 16: a slave rented for 3 shekels per year, the last shekel and a half to be paid in barley. The owner of the slave is to furnish the slave with one garment. Other slave contracts indicate rent without specifying payment e.g. *VAS*, V, No. 14.

⁹⁴ Clay, *YOS*, III, No. 71: daily rent of boat for $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel; No. 119: 1 boat rented for 15 shekels for a month; Contenau, *TCL*, XIII, No. 196: boat rented for a month for 15 shekels; Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 147: boat rented for month for 13 shekels; No. 148: boat rented for a month at $12\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; No. 195: rent of boat from Eanna for 5 months for 5 shekels, but 150 *gur* barley are to be brought. This may be additional rent. *VAS*, V, No. 98: boat rented for 1 shekel daily (26th year of Darius); Contenau, *TCL*, XII, No. 121: a boat of 150 *gur* rented to Eanna for a month for 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ shekels; the owner even promises that if the boat does not hold 150 *gur* he will make adjustments. Dated to the 18th year of Nabunaid, though the opening phrase refers to the 17th year.

⁹⁵ *Nebuchadnezzar*, No. 291: 1 mina for the rent of oxen; Clay, *BE*, IX, No. 20: 1 black cow rented for a year for 10 *gur* barley; No. 52a: 1 ox rented for three years for 10 *gur* barley per year; No. 49: 2 oxen and their equipment rented for three years, together with 7 *gur* seed barley for a rent of 75 *gur* barley per year; No. 89: 4 oxen and equipment rented for three years at the rate of 150 *gur* per year. These rentals of oxen and equipment are very high.

⁹⁶ Contenau, *TCL*, XIII, No. 187; *VAS*, IV, No. 191; V, Nos. 145 and 50.

⁹⁷ Clay, *BE*, IX, No. 16.

paid eighteen hundred *gur* barley and one *gur* spelt for the year's rent of a canal.⁹⁸

Today in urban centers, only a small percentage of residents own their homes. The frequency with which leases of houses occur in Babylonia, the rent receipts, and other documents that are concerned with the renting of houses give the impression that in Babylonia, too, many preferred to rent rather than to buy. A detailed examination of the rent contract does not belong here, yet among various interesting details belongs the fact that the door was usually not furnished with the house, since a good wooden door was an expensive object. The renter was obligated to keep the roof and the walls in good repair and commonly paid his rent in two payments, at the beginning of the year and at the end of the first six months. During the Chaldean age the average rent of a house was ten shekels per year.⁹⁹ In the early Persian era, before Darius, the mean price rose to about fifteen shekels,¹⁰⁰ while during the reign of Darius the prices of rented houses rose to twenty shekels per year, and some rent contracts demanded still more.¹⁰¹ A rent document from the beginning of the reign of

⁹⁸ Clay, *PBS*, II, Part I, No. 104; cf. also Clay, *BE*, IX, No. 80: "the man who is over the rent of the Harri-piqudu canal."

⁹⁹ Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 43: house rented for 11 shekels a year; as an exception to the general rule, this rent is to be paid monthly. Evetts, *Babylonische Texte*, "Neriglissar," No. 52: house rented for 10½ shekels yearly; *VAS*, V, No. 23: house rented for 10 shekels yearly; No. 32: house rented for 8 shekels yearly; *Nabunaid*, No. 261: house rented for 5 years at a rent of 5 shekels yearly; No. 1030: house in Babylon rented for 13 shekels yearly; Krückmann, *TMH*, II/III: house rented for 4 years at 6 shekels per year.

¹⁰⁰ Tremayne, *YOS*, VII, No. 2: 3 shekels yearly for a house; No. 45: house rented for barley; *Cyrus*, No. 228: 10 shekels house rent for the year; Keiser, *BIN*, I, No. 118: house rented; *Cambyses*, No. 117: house rented for 23 shekels; No. 147: house rented for 1 mina 10 shekels yearly; No. 182: house rented for three years at a yearly rate of 16 shekels; Pohl, *An. or.*, VIII, No. 58: house rented at yearly rate of 10 shekels, 3 shekels deducted from rent for special repair work; similar contracts in Krückmann, *TMH*, II/III, Nos. 2, 3, 26, 27.

¹⁰¹ *VAS*, V, No. 61: house rented for 15 shekels yearly; No. 64: house rented for 18 shekels annually; No. 67: house rented for 13 shekels annually; No. 68: house rented for 25 shekels annually; No. 77: a special type of house (north house) rented for 5 shekels; No. 78: house rented for five years at 18 shekels yearly; No. 137: house rented for 9 shekels yearly; No. 138: house rented for 30 shekels yearly; No. 154: house rented for 7½ shekels for five months; No. 81: house rented for 13 shekels yearly; No. 84: house rented for 20 shekels yearly; No. 82: house rented for 20 shekels yearly; *Darius*, No. 256: house rented yearly at the rate of 15 shekels; No. 330: house rented for 30 shekels yearly; No. 378: house rented for 50 shekels yearly; Clay, *BE*, VIII, No. 112: house rented for 30 shekels yearly; *Darius*, No. 489: house rented for 24 shekels yearly; No. 499: house rented for 32 shekels yearly; Clay, *BRLM*, I, No. 74: house rented yearly for 13 shekels; No. 78: slave rents his house for 12 shekels yearly; No. 85: house rented for 10 shekels yearly, undated; *VAS*, V, No. 139: house rented for 8 shekels yearly; No. 151: house rented for 20 shekels yearly.

Artaxerxes I provided for forty shekels of yearly rent.¹⁰² Rents were rising, just as prices of commodities were increasing. Longer term leases at times had a cheaper rate, a normal concession made by the owner to his renter for signing the contract.

Also abundant is the information on the renting of grain land and orchard land. The owner and the renter may agree on definite shares, carefully adjusted to the type of land rented, or the renter may pay a fixed amount of natural produce to the owner. Only rarely is money involved in this type of contract. Hence these documents will not aid much in establishing prices and values; they belong rather to an investigation of legal agreements and to a study of agriculture in Babylonia.

In a survey of comparative prices it is most interesting to observe that in Babylonia and Assyria rulers had for centuries attempted to define and fix prices. From the end of the third millennium, even before the great Hammurabi, down to Ashurbanipal in the seventh century B.C., their decrees and their lists of prices have survived. Benevolent kings and strong kings attempted to create prosperity for their people and a feeling of good will by announcing official prices and, at times, official wages. According to their economic thinking, general prosperity was fostered by a low level of prices. Their efforts may not be condemned summarily, for by its price-fixing attempts the government wished to check excessive profits and to protect the poor insignificant individual. It is also apparent from commercial documents that royal efforts to stabilize prices were but partly successful. Business refused to be bound by artificial price levels, and often the truthful contracts exhibit drastic variations from the promulgated official prices. Therefore it is of special interest that in the later Babylonian period there is no apparent attempt on the part of rulers to control prices. It is also significant that the picture of a prosperous Babylonian business life which has come to us from classical sources is the picture of this later age.

Prices had reached a natural adjustment based on the laws of supply and demand. There was fluctuation; yet, when one shekel bought

¹⁰² *VAS*, V, No. 119.

one *gur* of dates, it could also buy other necessities in accordance with the ratio in which they were produced and demanded in daily life, not as law attempted to fix that price. Prices advanced generally so that the ratio of comparative values remained relatively constant. To explain the pronounced rise of prices during the Persian age is not easy. The increasing wealth of individuals, the rise of capitalism, the monetary policies of Persia, her wars, and perhaps new sources of precious and base metals—all must be considered possible influences in the changing prices. More dimly seen, but possibly of basic importance for this problem, are the changes which were occurring in the social and economic order of the country.

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